



DR. HARVEY'S LETTER
IN
Reply to Dr. Tyler's Discourse
ON
HUMAN ABILITY AND INABILITY.

THE LIBRARY OF THE
MAR 1924
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE LIBRARY OF THE
MAR 1924
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

911718 11 2 7 11 11 11

11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11

11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11

11 11

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. DR. TYLER,

IN REPLY TO HIS DISCOURSE ON

Human Ability and Inability.

BY

JOSEPH HARVEY, D. D.,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Thompsonville, Conn.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.:

SAMUEL BOWLES AND COMPANY, PRINTERS.

1855.

L. Sch. 30 Oct 24

252
T21d YL

4 Mar 27 g. Burton Hist. Cal.

LETTER.

THOMPSONVILLE, JAN. 10th, 1855.

DR. TYLER:

Rev. and Dear Sir:

I have received through the mail a copy of your Discourse on Human Ability and Inability, for which I return you my thanks. I imagine that, by sending me the Discourse, you intended to call my attention to the subject, and perhaps to invite me to express my views. Under this impression I am free to say, that your discourse presents to my mind some difficulties, which I proceed frankly and candidly to state in a few remarks for your consideration.

My first remark is, there is a want of affinity between the doctrine of your discourse and your text, and not only so; there is a manifest variance between the two.

Your text is found in 2 Cor. vii. 10. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not." The Apostle here speaks of the offerings of charity, not of the exercise of powers or the possession of powers at all. But, admitting that the principle involved may properly be applied to powers, still it appears to me that your doctrine cannot be found in the text. "For if there be first a willing mind." This is the salient point of the text on which all that follows depends. The true sentiment is, the willing mind is accepted in the use of such means and powers as a man has. Now what is the doctrine which you force from this passage? "God does not require of men what they have no power to do." If you had said, God does not require of men what, in connection with a willing mind, they have no power to do, your doctrine and text would have been in harmony. But you leave out the willing mind; you omit the limitation, and put forth your doctrine in the form of an universal proposition, applicable to all cases, willing or unwilling. What the Apostle says of a specific case, even that

of a right heart, you take and apply to all cases, even to cases directly the opposite of that specified, and say God does not require of men, without distinction, good or bad, willing or unwilling, saint or sinner, for you know that men compose these classes, what they have no power to do. Now if all this is true, one thing is certain, the text teaches no such thing.

Let us now look at the more serious part of the remark, viz. the variance between doctrine and text. If a willing mind is essential to acceptable service in the use of means and powers, as the text teaches, then no such service can be done without a willing mind, or with an unwilling mind. And if it cannot be done, then no man can have power to do it. You will admit that impenitent sinners have unwilling minds. If so, they have no power to do what God requires, because the willing mind is essential to such doing, it cannot be done without, and surely, they have no power to do what cannot be done. But does not God require of sinners, as well as of others, to do right? Does he not command them, one and all and everywhere, to repent? Does not God then require of all men, what some men, having unwilling minds, have no power to do? And is not this clearly the sentiment of your text. But your doctrine is, God does not require of men what they have no power to do. Your doctrine and your text therefore are in conflict. If I wished to prove directly the opposite of the doctrine of your discourse I could not desire more apposite testimony than that of your text, it is full and conclusive to that purpose. So it appears to me. The question is not can a sinner repent if he will? This is not the point at issue. Can he repent if he will not? This is the question to be answered. If you say he can, tell me how. Name the power he has to do it. Is it conscience, is it reason, is it intellect? Can conscience do it without a willing mind? It may produce remorse and lead a sinner, with Judas, to go and hang himself. But is this true repentance? Will God accept a rational or intellectual repentance without the heart? You will relieve the subject of great embarrassment, if you will specify and describe the power which a sinner has to do what God requires of him, with an unwilling mind. And surely if there be such a power it can be ascertained.

My second remark is, your doctrine is at variance with other parts of your discourse. In the first sentence you say, "It is a maxim of scripture that God looketh on the heart." This would seem to mean that God requires the heart as essential to acceptable service. In this view it is an unquestionable and invariable

maxim of scripture. And yet your doctrine says, "God does not require of men," of all men and every man without distinction, "what they have no power to do." This would seem to mean that God does not look on the heart at all. One of three things must be true of sinners in regard to power. Either they have power to do what God requires without the affections of the heart, or they have power to change their own hearts, or they have no power at all to the purpose. As you assert that they have power, and as I do not understand you to say they have power to change their own hearts, the conclusion is unavoidable that you mean to say, that sinners have power to do what God requires, without the affections of the heart, or, as the case is, with an unholy heart. How is this consistent with the truth that God looketh on the heart.

Again. Your doctrine conflicts with your definition of power. You say, "A man has power to do a thing, when he possesses all these faculties of body or mind or both, which enable him to do it, if it is his desire or wish to do it." Your doctrine is that men have power to do what God requires when they have no desire or wish to do it. Both of these cannot be the true account of power. One or the other is an error. Which is it, the definition or the doctrine? I should say the doctrine.

You say again that you use the word power in the ordinary sense, and here, in the face of your definition, you say, we do not always nor generally include the desire or wish in the idea of power, and assume that the ordinary use excludes these from the idea of power. Here we have a new issue, in regard to the ordinary sense of the word power, concerning which I remark, if by ordinary sense you mean scriptural usage, or general usage in regard to moral and religious subjects, I feel compelled, in justice to truth, to deny that you use the word in the ordinary sense. So far from this is the truth, that the word power is never used, so far as I am aware, in respect to these subjects without including the desire or wish, or what I suppose you mean, the affections of the heart. There is a good reason for this. If the affections of the heart be excluded, all the basis of morals and religion is removed. When Jacob wrestled and prevailed, his name was called Israel, because, as a prince, he had power with God. You will not suppose that Jacob overcame omnipotence by his physical strength. In what sense then had he power, but by his faith and the earnest desire of his heart? In John 1. 12 it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Does power

here mean natural faculty merely, and if natural men have this power, how came it to be given to them as believers? In Micah 3. 8. it is written, "I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord." Does power here mean natural faculty merely without the affections of the heart? But I need not multiply references. If there is a passage in the scriptures in which the word power, relating to moral or religious subjects, is used in the sense in which you use it, I have not been able to find it. The same may be said of common religious and theological usage. When we speak of the power of faith, the power of love, do we mean the natural faculties of body or mind or both, which are necessary to believe and love, without including the affections of the heart? When Paul speaks of the power of godliness, which some, who had the form, denied; did he mean natural faculty merely? It seems to me you must admit that the sense in which you use the word power is not the scriptural nor the religious sense. If by ordinary sense you mean, that of the common transactions of life, in relation to outward conduct in temporal affairs, then I must be permitted to enter a protest against the practice of introducing such a sense into the discussion of religious subjects and applying it to religious truth or duty. You say in your preface, that you do not see why the language is not as proper in the one case as in the other. Allow me to suggest a reason why it is not, which to my mind is conclusive. It is this. The relation between money and debts, between the physical strength of children and the reasonable commands of parents, and between the amount of property a man may possess, and that which he gives in charity, is entirely different from the relation between moral agency and duty required. Money, if sufficient in quantity, is full and perfect power to cancel a debt, without regard to motives or affections of the heart. Physical strength in children is full and perfect power to obey the commands of parents relating to outward action. The child having that strength has power to obey, be his desire or wish what it may. In these cases an outward act is required and that only, and physical strength is fully adequate to that act. The motives, in the sense in which you speak of power, are not taken into account. Neither the creditor nor the parent can take cognizance of the motive from which the debt is paid, or the command is complied with any farther than the motive is indicated by outward action. If the outward act is performed the jurisdiction of human authority ceases. A debt may be paid unwillingly, a child may do unwillingly what a parent requires. A large sum may be given

in outward charity without a benevolent motive. Paul supposes that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor and have no true charity. Not so with moral agency, in respect to duty. In that relation the first and essential thing, as your text teaches, is a willing mind. No moral duty is done or can be done without the affections of the heart. The cases then are radically different. And it is, I apprehend, by mingling unwarrantably these two classes of relations and forcing analogies between them, as I think you have done in your discourse, that the obliquity and inconsistency of your doctrine have been elaborated. To make these relations at all analogous to each other you must raise these ordinary transactions to the platform of moral duties, and place them under the operation and bring them to the standard of moral law. And then they are no longer mere social transactions between man and man, but moral acts between the soul and God, who only can take cognizance of the heart. In that case your ordinary commercial sense of the word fails, and the moral sense, which always includes the affections of the heart, takes its place. I do not say that these ordinary transactions are not, in the sight of God, moral duties, or that men are not accountable for them as such; but I say that, as far as human cognizance and jurisdiction go, they are merely outward acts, and that by the outward act, without any regard to motive, every human demand is satisfied. When regarded as moral duties they stand on precisely the same ground with all other moral duties, in regard to which power always includes the affections of the heart. The ordinary sense of the word power, as it stands related to outward conduct, and transactions between men, which go for what they are worth to them, cannot be admitted into discussion of moral and religious subjects, and all who treat on those subjects are bound to use the word exclusively in the scriptural sense.

Again. There is a discrepancy between your doctrine and that part of your discourse, which says, "There is a sense in which sinners are unable to do what God requires. I admit there is a sense in which they are unable. This the scriptures clearly teach." Now this looks very much like contradiction. It seems to assert that sinners have power to do what they are unable to do. How is this? Your doctrine, "God does not require of men what they have no power to do." Or, to give the doctrine an affirmative form,—men, sinners though they are, have power to do all that God requires of them. To do, observe, not to be obligated to do, but to do. Put your finger if you please on that word

do, for we shall presently have occasion to recall it. Men are not required to do what they have no power to do. What is the meaning of that word *do*? Webster defines it thus: "To perform, to execute, to carry into effect, to finish, to bring to a conclusion. God, then, does not require of men what they have no power to perform, to finish, to bring to a conclusion. Not to be obligated to do, not to do in part, not to begin, but to finish, to bring to a conclusion. Supposing you should see a man stand and look at a piece of work and say, I am unable to do it, I admit that I am unable, the scriptures clearly teach that I am unable, and yet I have power to do it, to finish, to bring it to a complete conclusion. What would you conclude about him? Would you not think that he was telling riddles? But here we are met by two senses. In one sense men can do what God requires, and in another sense they cannot. And this seeming contradiction is after all only a paradox. Let us see how this is. That there are propositions that are true in one sense and not in another, I do not deny. Is your doctrine one of them? To arrive at a correct solution of the question, let us inquire, are there two senses in which God requires duty to be done? Does He say in his law, let those that can do it, love the Lord their God with all their heart &c., and those that are not so disposed, let them love the Lord their God in another sense, even with their natural faculty and physical strength, or with what they have? If this is not the purport of the requirement, then it is but fair to conclude that it cannot be the spirit of obedience. To render this point clear, and to see that a command must be obeyed in the sense in which it is given, we may refer to the example of the young man that came to Christ with the inquiry, what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ told him to keep the commandments, in other words, to do what God had required. He replied, all these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet? He had a *sense* in which he could keep and did keep the law. But unhappily it was not the *sense* in which the requirement was made, and therefore would not answer the purpose. The sense of the requirement is the only sense in which it can be done. What then is the requirement? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Is there more than one sense in which men can love God with all their hearts? God commands all men everywhere to repent. Is there more than one sense in which men can truly repent? If not, can there be more than one sense in which they have power to do, or can be unable to do it? The requirement is

one and has but one sense; the spirit of obedience is one, must not power to do it be power to do it in its own sense and that only? And inability to do it must respect its own sense and no other.

But your doctrine asserts that God requires nothing of men which they have no power to do, while you admit that they are unable to do it in a sense. A sense of what? Of the Law? The Law has but one sense. A man is either able or unable to obey in that sense, and that only. If he is unable to obey in the sense of the Law, he is unable to obey in every sense, for the Law can be obeyed, I repeat, only in its own sense. Is it sense of inability? Is there more than one power or class of powers by which men can love God or their neighbor? Does not the Law confine its requirements to specified powers and their exercise? And when the Law says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c., does it mean that man shall love with his heart, love with his soul, love with his strength and love with his mind, or does it mean that he shall love with his heart, and with the other powers in conjunction with the heart and subordination to it? That is, that the soul, strength and mind shall be under the control and direction of the heart in the work of love? As the heart is the seat of affection, it would seem to be the only power which is able to love. We can hardly conceive of a person loving with his strength, or his mind, as a separate independent power. If the heart loves God, all the other powers love him too, in co-operation. If the heart is enmity, all the other powers follow in its train. If this be a correct view of the subject, and that it is who will deny, it would seem that the law contemplates but one sense in which it can be obeyed, and that sense depends on the affections of the heart. Now I ask you seriously, can there be two different senses in which the Moral Law can be obeyed; are there two different senses in which a man, a moral agent, may be unable to obey it? Can it be obeyed or disobeyed by the heart in one sense, and the process be reversed in spite of the heart, in another sense, by the other powers? Can the other powers proceed to love God in the absence of the heart or in resistance to it? What, love God with the strength or the mind only? How then can there be inability of heart and ability of another kind and in another sense? If this cannot be, then remember God has said, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. If all this is so, then I desire to know how it is possible for a sinner, whose heart is not right in the sight

of God, and is therefore morally unable, as you admit, to be in possession of a power to do what God has required. In other words, I desire to know why your doctrine and your admission do not involve an absolute contradiction. Can we set aside the affections of the heart, and say a man has power to do, because he has some remnants of power, which, in connection with the affections, are requisite to do; and then admit the heart to its place, and say man is unable to do? By what authority do we attempt this dissection and permutation? For myself I must say I regard it as mere theological legerdemain. Be that as it may, it is evident that the sense, in which you admit that sinners are not able to do what God requires, is the only true sense, and this you admit the scriptures clearly teach. Consequently your doctrine is hypothesis in conflict with your own honest admission and the clear teachings of scripture. Nothing can be plainer than that sinners are either able or unable to do their duty. They cannot be both. If in any sense they are unable to do it, they cannot be in another sense able. Power is nothing but a name, where real inability exists. Which then shall we believe, your theological theory that God requires nothing that man cannot do, or the clear teaching of scripture that men are unable? Do you expect us to believe both?

You say there are two kinds of inability, natural and moral. This I admit. But then remember, these two kinds do not both lie within the range of moral agency. Natural inability has no relation to this subject, for when a man becomes a subject of this inability he ceases to be an accountable creature. A brute, an idiot, an insane person, have respectively natural inability, but their case lies outside of moral agency, as do some of your illustrations about controlling elements, lifting mountains and plucking the sun from his place. These things are formidable only in sound. Within the limits of moral agency, there is but just one kind of ability or inability. And as we are speaking of moral agents, it seems proper that we confine our attention to that which concerns them. I do not think it necessary to prove that men are not brutes, nor idiots, nor maniacs, any more than it is to prove that they are not required to control elements, or tempests.

I repeat it then, as a truth of vital importance, that inside of moral agency, there is but one kind of inability, as there is also but one kind of ability. And these both depend on the state or disposition of the heart.

But here your discourse meets me with a caveat. "You will observe," it says, "that I do not affirm that sinners have all power to do their duty, in other words that they are able in every sense to do what God requires." You are fairly entitled to the full value of this caution, if we can ascertain what that value is. Let us try. You remark, in explanation, that the inability which the scriptures clearly teach does not consist in the want of physical power, but in the want of disposition. By all power, then, I understand you to mean physical power with a right disposition. This you do not affirm. Therefore what you do affirm is, that sinners have "physical power" with a wrong disposition, and that, with this power thus situated, they can do all that God requires. That is to say, with "physical power," notwithstanding the opposition of a perverse heart, they can do all that God requires. And what does God require? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." You affirm then that sinners with "physical power" can love God with all their heart, when their heart is full of enmity. Can you tell how this can be done? If you can, you can tell how sinners can see the kingdom of God without being born again, how a man can serve two masters, which would be giving great relief to many an impenitent sinner who desires to acquire this very secret. Did you ever see the man, do you expect ever to see one, that can love God with an heart of enmity, or with "physical powers" in connection with such an heart? What then becomes of your "physical power" to do what God requires? Where is it, what is it? Perhaps you will say that you do not affirm that the thing ever was done or ever will be, or can be, without a change of heart, and yet you are quite sure that "physical power" is able to do it. I reply, if "physical power" is able to do what never was done, never will or can be, then I despair of reaching it with logic or scripture, and must turn it over to range the undefined regions of mysticism. But you will ask me, is not physical power a constituent part of the power to do what God requires, and is it not good as far as it goes? I answer, certainly, but how far does it go? The form of godliness is good so far as it goes, but the difficulty is, it does not go, and cannot go far enough to make godliness.

If you still insist on your distinction between power and all power, I ask, do you mean by power that which is adequate to the effect of doing what God requires? If so, then what need of all power? Enough is enough. If it does not mean what is adequate to the effect, but must have all power to help it out, then of

what use is it? Why not resort to all power at once, since you must do it at last or fail of the effect? And if power is inadequate to the effect, what is the amount of the doctrine of your discourse? If men have power to do what God requires, and yet, after all, cannot do it without more power, or all power, your doctrine will not give them much comfort. Inadequate power, in this case, is no power. Do you mean to say, as you appear to do in your discourse, that "physical power," though it cannot reach to the spirit and intent of divine requirement, yet serves to evince criminality, prevent excuses, and stop the mouths of objectors? I answer, there is no need of this device; moral agency does all this, and does it consistently. If it were otherwise, it would be questionable whether it is wise to attempt to stop the mouths of gainsayers with a figment. Do you still feel that this darling power is too valuable to be given up so, and insist that, if it is not all power, it is some power or something of power, if it is not an integer it is a fraction, and ought to pass for what it is worth? I profess to know something of numerical fractions, but I confess I do not feel at home in these theological fractions; they are a puzzle. I beg to be excused, and must be satisfied to know that a power that promises what it cannot perform, that claims to be a significant power, while it goes limping and halting on the broken crutches of moral inability, is no power to enable sinners to love God, or to prevent them from not doing it.

My third remark is, the arguments by which you attempt to support the doctrine extorted from your text, so far from sustaining, do not even reach the doctrine.

The character and government of God are all that you have represented them to be. But when you make the appeal to your hearers whether it would be right for God to require of men what they have no power to do, you leap over what you have just before admitted, viz: that sinners are in a sense unable to do what God requires, and that this inability is no excuse for sin, and no ground of complaint against the character or government of God. It seems then that the government of God is fully vindicated, while sinners are in a sense unable. The vindication then does not reach your doctrine, does not need it. Especially as it appears that there is but one sense in which man, as a moral agent, can be unable. Why go beyond the limits of moral agency to bring argument, when the supply within the limit is abundant? And if it were not, what aid can be derived from a nominal power, which, when applied to the case, is no power at all, and

does not reach the object. No one will affirm that the justice, truth or goodness of God require that he should make men willing to obey his commands. This would interfere with all correct views of responsible agency. Moral inability then is entirely consistent with the character and government of God. And this is the only inability which is claimed, or which can exist in the case of man as a moral agent. Any other sense of inability would destroy moral agency. But, moral inability is not a name or a shadow, it is a reality, a deep, entire and absolute inability. So it is represented and clearly taught in scripture. Is it not enough that God has made men moral agents, capable, if they are so disposed, to know and do his will, and left them to their free choice? Must he also ensure them against miscarriage or transgression? Must he give them power to do what he requires, whether they will or will not? Your doctrine says this has been done, but your argument from the character and government of God does not reach that length. It is not needed; it avails nothing.

I am aware that remarks, here and there in your discourse, would seem to imply that you consider a right disposition requisite to obedience, and that you occasionally advert to your text, which makes a willing mind the pivot of its statement. I should be very glad to be satisfied that such on the whole, is your belief. But there is your doctrine in unqualified terms, there are your efforts to explain away moral inability by another sense, there is your declaration that the desire or wish is not always, nor generally, included in the idea of power. From all this it does appear too evident to admit of a doubt, that you mean to make yourself responsible for the sentiment, that men can serve God acceptably without right affections, or even with those which are wrong. In respect to this sentiment, I would borrow your argument and ask, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right, is there unrighteousness with God? And I appeal to every rational person whether it would be right to take no account of disposition or motives, or to treat the willing and unwilling alike. If moral inability does not excuse sin, and is itself the very spirit and essence of all criminality, would it be right and just in God to overlook it?

Again, your argument from the nature of the requirements themselves is equally inert in the case. You say, and say well, that the commands of God are not grievous. But you seem to forget that the first and chief point of requirement in the Moral Law is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and set yourself to the task of showing that the nature of the require-

ment is such that sinners can do what God requires with no right heart, that is with no love at all. Now I ask, is not this virtually changing the divine law, or presenting it under a partial and mutilated form? The law demands the heart or its affections, and you attempt to meet and satisfy that demand with something which you call power, but whatever it is, it is not love. If sinners can do all that God requires with a perverse and rebellious heart, then why does the law require the affections of the heart as the first thing? I need not follow an argument drawn from a mutilated law, and setting up a fragment as a sample of the nature of the law. You must be sensible, on reflection, of the unfairness and sophistry of such a course of argument. Take the law as it is, and tell me, does not God require of all men, sinners as well as others, the affections of their hearts? And can sinners, who withhold and alienate those affections, do all that God requires of them, with any other power or powers which they possess? These are plain, simple questions, which a child can answer, and the answer will leave your argument, from the nature of the law, far off from the track. Do you suppose that God cannot justly give a command without, at the same time, giving a disposition to obey it? Surely you do not. Why then allege inability as conflicting with the law, when that inability consists in the want of a right disposition, or the exercise of a wrong? Do you say there must be ability somehow, and as inability exists in one sense, there must be ability in another sense to preserve the balance of power? Why so? What is the difficulty? You admit that moral inability exists, that it is no excuse for sin, that God is righteous in his requirements nevertheless. What more do you want, why not let the subject rest just here? Can you expect to find a better conclusion? You say, and truly, that "God does not require us to love Him more than with all our heart." Neither, observe particularly, does it allow us to love Him less than with all the heart. How is it true then that men can love God with no right affection at all, or even with hearts of enmity?

The same reply, in substance, which has been given to your argument from the requirements of the law, is applicable to your argument from the invitations of the gospel. You request your hearers to look through the gospel and observe the manner in which God addresses his sinful creatures. You ask them to look at his invitations, his entreaties and expostulations. Then you inquire what sincerity can there be in these invitations and entreaties, if men have no more power to turn from sin to holiness

than to control elements! To this I reply, that the inquiry in this form is simply begging the question, because it assumes as true your side of the point in discussion, which is that physical powers have the same relation to moral as to physical effects? Power to control elements is physical power related to effects of its own nature. Inability in this case is simply a want of omnipotence, without any consideration of motives or disposition. Now to apply such a principle to moral relations and acts, in respect to which disposition or motive is the first and chief consideration, is mingling things which are essentially different, and tends to nothing but confusion. All this is foreign to the subject in hand. The question now before us is, not whether the sinner is the subject of natural inability which destroys moral agency; not whether he is a brute, or an idiot, or a lunatic; not whether he is bound with chains or confined within massive walls, so that he is hindered from doing as he desires; not whether he is able to control elements; nothing of all this, or the like, is asserted or believed. But the question is, can the sinner perform moral duty with physical power? or perform holy duties with an unholy heart? Has the sinner, being a moral agent and acting freely; has the sinner, being a sinner, a voluntary enemy to God, and impenitent in that enmity, at the same time power to love God and do all that he requires? In other words, can a man hate and love the same object; obey and disobey the same law at the same time?

In regard to sincerity in the invitations of the gospel, surely you do not suppose that sincerity in giving an invitation implies obligation to give a disposition to accept it. When you invite a person to your house, do you feel liable to the charge of insincerity if you do not procure his acceptance? When God invites sinners to the abundant provisions of the gospel, and they will not come, they are indeed so averse to the provision that, according to our Saviour's teaching, they cannot come, is God chargeable with insincerity? This plea is too stale to be seriously offered; as is also the plea that God makes men sin and then punishes them for being as he made them. God does not make men sin, they make themselves to sin; sin is their own, its consequences are of their own procuring, and if they choose to continue in it, and that choice is so strong that they cannot abandon their course, are they not justly liable to punishment? Would it be right in a moral ruler to pass over such obstinate criminality, which is all the more heinous and inexcusable on account of its strength and obstinacy?

My fourth remark is, that in the face of your doctrine, and of various passages of your discourse, to which I have already referred, you apparently, if not intentionally, concede the whole ground in question by saying, "My meaning is that God does not require of men what they might not do if rightly disposed. That they have all the power which is necessary to render them proper subjects of moral government, and to render their disobedience in every case utterly inexcusable." Indeed ! Is this your meaning, and all you mean ? Well, you ought to know your own meaning best. But one cannot help asking why you did not put the qualifying words, "if rightly disposed," into your doctrine as well as into this sentence ? This is a material alteration. If this is your meaning, why assert that God requires nothing of men which they have no power to do, when you know that the most of men are not rightly disposed ? Why the effort to convict others of error who believe with you that men are moral agents, proper subjects of moral government, and wholly inexcusable in sin ? Is there not an occult meaning in this sentence, to this amount, that moral agency is not sufficient to render sinners, with their moral inability upon them, proper subjects of moral government, or inexcusable in sin, and that some other power is requisite to this purpose ? That sinners have such a power, and therefore have power to do their duty, though not rightly disposed ? I am inclined to the belief that such is your meaning from the fact, that in a note, you undertake to draw a parallel between moral agency and what you call natural ability, saying that one is taken for granted in the scriptures as well as the other. This note, which I shall examine in due time, seems to prove that, to your mind, moral agency and natural ability are not identical, and that the latter is an extra power which serves when moral agency fails. At all events, your explanation will not suffice to remove the impression from the minds of your readers that your discourse, as a whole, advocates the sentiment that sinners have power to do all that God requires of them, their moral inability notwithstanding. We must hold the discourse responsible for such an advocacy, and its author too, until he tells us in plain language, that his explanation is meant to be a retraction of his doctrine. And when he says this the controversy is ended.

In the mean time I say, that I admit obligation but deny ability. Do you ask, are not obligation and ability necessarily commensurate, and co-existent ? I answer, not at all. Obligation is founded on moral agency ; ability is founded on disposition. "A moral

agent," according to Pres. Edwards, "is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality." Moral agency exists without respect to moral character or disposition. Obligation founded upon it, exists also irrespectively of disposition. A person is equally obligated to do his duty, whether he is or is not disposed to do it. Otherwise there could be no such thing as sin. If obligation depends on a disposition to obey, then sin, which implies a contrary disposition, would violate no obligation, and would be its own excuse. All the sinner would need to say would be, I am not disposed to obey, and his obligation, and consequently his sin, would cease. For where there is no obligation there can be no violation of it, and therefore no sin. This would lead to the absurdity that sin annihilates itself, or the more sin the less criminality. But, while obligation is founded on moral agency, ability to perform moral duty depends on the disposition, for the plain reason that moral duties require the affections of the heart, which spring from disposition. If men are required to love, and do in fact hate, it is evident that while they hate they they cannot love. Besides, the disposition may be so strong and so confirmed by habit, that the moral effect will as certainly and invariably follow, as a natural effect will follow a natural cause. This is what President Edwards calls "moral necessity." "That is the necessity of connexion and consequence which arises from such moral causes as the strength of inclination or motives, and the connexion there is between them and certain volitions and actions." Concerning this moral necessity, he says, "It may be as absolute as natural necessity. That is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a natural effect is with its natural cause." He adds, "When motives or previous biases are very strong, all will allow there is some difficulty in going against them. And if they were yet stronger the difficulty would be still greater. And therefore, if more still were added to their strength to a certain degree, it would make the difficulty so great that it would be wholly impossible to surmount it." Now whether we call this moral necessity or moral inability is immaterial. It is something that ensures its own effect with absolute certainty. Hence the language of scripture, in which sinners are said to be dead in sin, slaves to sin, prisoners to satan, as having destroyed themselves, and as being helpless in their moral ruin. They are not so in a sense that destroys moral agency, but they are so as to any power which they have for self-deliverance. Do you say this is moral inability? I say so too, but it is inabil-

ity nevertheless, and that, according to Edwards, as absolute as any which arises from natural causes. The scriptures teach this when they say "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. xiii. 23.

My next remark is, your reference to authorities in support of your theory of natural ability is unsatisfactory. You say in your preface that "the views presented in the following discourse are believed to be substantially the views which have been maintained by New England Calvinists generally since the days of President Edwards." Now I do not question that you believe this, but I am far from being satisfied that it is true in point of fact. You say that your views are set forth in the treatise of President Edwards on the will. I have been somewhat familiar with that treatise, and must say that I cannot find a trace of your doctrine in it. What I have already cited from that treatise shows that the author regarded moral inability, or what he calls moral necessity, absolute in its certain connexion with its effects, and invincible by any human or natural power. Now that he should turn so short a corner as to teach that sinners, who are the subjects of this inability, have power to do what God requires of them, is what I cannot believe.

As to the other names you have mentioned, I have not time to examine the sentiments connected with them particularly. But this I venture to say of them jointly and severally, if they were put to the task of explaining what they mean, they would say they mean moral agency, and nothing more. Indeed, leaving out a note and the prominence given to natural ability in the doctrine and general aspect of your discourse, I should conclude that moral agency is all that you intend to inculcate. For I observe that, occasionally, as if alarmed at the exposedness of your position, you fall back on moral agency, at least in appearance, and very quietly repose on the announcement that your meaning is, that men have power to do what is required of them, if rightly disposed. I am confident that such would be the result in the case of every author you name. Whether I am correct in this or not is of no great consequence. For I suppose we are to call no man master in such a sense as to copy his errors or his foibles. Great men are not always wise, and to adopt their defects would place us on par with the Chinese tailor, who put a patch in the elbow of a new coat because he found one in the elbow of an old coat given him as a pattern. Suppose you should go into a mer-

chant's store and ask for a pound of tea or a yard of cloth, and he should deal you out a quantity at random, saying, the most eminent dealers in New England consider this good weight and measure, and this the best method of dealing, though they do not all say as much publicly. Would you not regard this as a foible, and ask him, do you not keep balances and a yard stick? So it may be said to all second hand dealers in theology, "to the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."

Since we are on the topic of human authority, it may not be amiss to take notice of a few facts as matter of history. The "confession of faith, owned and consented to by the Elders and Messengers of the churches (Congregational) in the Colony of Connecticut in New England, assembled by delegation at Saybrook, Sept. 9, 1708," is before me. In it is the following article, viz: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so, as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." This, if not adopted "from the days of President Edwards," was after his birth, and shows what was the sentiment of his immediate predecessors, and has remained to this day as the only public and common symbol of faith with the Congregational churches of Connecticut. The confession of faith of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America, contains the same article, in the same words. The catechism put forth by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in answer to the question, "Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God," says, "No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed." So far as I am aware there has not been a confession of faith put forth by any Orthodox body of Christians, from the time of the Reformation to the present day, that has not contained, substantially, the same article. Luther, as you know, labored abundantly to inculcate the bondage of the will. It was one of his great themes. Of Calvin I need not speak, he speaks for himself. It has been the uniform belief of all sound Christians, that fallen man is impotent in the matter of his own recovery, impotent beyond the reach of all human power. We hear Arminians, since the Reformation, talking of gracious power, and self-determining power, and common grace; we hear Pelagians, before and since, talking of man's

native innocency, of a power of contrary choice and of a governing purpose, which yields to desperate efforts. But when, until your discourse appeared, have we heard any man or body of men, claiming to be sound in the faith, say, "God does not require of men what they have no power to do." No, brother, you will have to take heed to your doctrine or you will inevitably find yourself in bad company. It is true that expressions and terms have sometimes inadvertently been used, by sound divines, which, unexplained, would seem to favor such a sentiment. But in all such cases, so far as I know, when explanation has brought out the true meaning, it has been moral agency, and nothing more. And should this prove true in your own case, no one will rejoice more than myself. But as the case now is, your discourse will doubtless be hailed as an ally by all the antagonists of evangelical truth. And I venture to predict that it will be a rallying point for all those who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others. Thus, by means of your discourse, though unintentionally on your part, you "make the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life."

You must, I think, be under some misapprehension as to the kind of doctrines preached in connexion with the great revivals, near the close of the last and beginning of the present centuries. Human ability, so far as I know, was not one of those doctrines. And when at all alluded to, it was, I am confident, only in the sense of moral agency. It cannot surely have escaped your recollection, that the great and prominent doctrines of that interesting period, were the native and entire depravity of man, his consequent lost and dependent condition, the necessity of regeneration by the spirit of God, the doctrine of election, and sovereign grace, and the necessity of special divine power in every case of saving conversion. These were the doctrines which God was pleased to bless so extensively for the revival of his work and the glory of his name. And the churches in Connecticut would not have tolerated any preacher among them who was not clear and pointed on these subjects. This you know as well as I. And what but the suppression of these doctrines can account for the degeneracy of more recent revivals into scenes of animal excitement any stoney ground experience?

My next remark is, the doctrine of your discourse is in discordance with the language and teaching of the scriptures.

It is a significant if not an overwhelming fact that not

one word or intimation of natural ability is found in the scriptures; NOT ONE. It is nowhere spoken of or alluded to in any form or manner. In proof of this occurs the remarkable circumstance, that you could not find a text in the whole Bible on which to found your doctrine by legitimate relation. If there had been a passage to your purpose, doubtless you would have found it. Was it so, that you were under the necessity of pressing a text into service, and that the one selected would not teach natural ability until it had been eviscerated and put to torture under the screws of implication? It is marvelous that this circumstances did not stay your farther progress in the undertaking. But you say, in a note, that human ability is taken for granted in the scriptures, just as moral agency is, and that being understood, the inspired writers did not think it necessary to speak of it any more than they felt it necessary to speak in so many words of moral agency. That this is the best and the most you can say is doubtless true. But is it satisfactory? Is the analogy a just one? is it founded in truth? Moral agency, as a truth, pervades the scriptures from beginning to end. Man was created a moral agent, he was placed under command as a moral agent, he fell as a moral agent, he incurred forfeiture and penalty as a moral agent, he has the offers and invitations of the gospel as a moral agent; all the entreaties and expostulations of the scriptures are addressed to men as moral agents, and a future judgment day awaits them as moral agents. Every one knows and feels moral agency. It is matter of consciousness that man is a being capable of performing actions that have a moral quality good or bad, and is able to do his duty if so disposed. It was then unnecessary to give this truth a name on the inspired pages, as unnecessary as it would be for a painter, after having painted an house, to write under it, this is an house. But is it so with natural ability, in the case of fallen men, to do what is required of them, when not disposed? Is this ability a matter of consciousness or intuition? Is it anywhere implied or involved, or understood in a single passage of the scriptures? How can you say it is, when the scriptures say in plain terms, directly the opposite, when our Saviour most explicitly declares, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him?" To cut this analogy of yours short and put it at rest, I have need only to call your attention to the fact that moral inability is clearly taught in the scriptures, which you admit. Now if this be clearly taught, and there is still another sense in which a sinner

is able to come to Christ of himself, would it not have been indispensable to a true statement, that that sense should have been as clearly taught as the other, and the proper distinction between them made plain? You appear to consider the distinction of great practical importance, and to think that preachers ought carefully to observe it and bring it out, lest they leave a wrong and hurtful impression. What then do you think of the preaching of Christ and his apostles, who observed no such distinction, nor even alluded to it? How can their practice be defended on the supposition that sinners, who are unable in one sense, are able in another? Surely if ever explanation is needed it is here. It is altogether incredible that the scriptures should have passed over human ability in silence, while they clearly teach human inability, if such ability were a reality. It would be impossible in that case to vindicate them from being accessory to error. They could not be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, if they shed no light on this distinction of such "great practical importance," provided that it exist.

The conclusion then is that the silence of the scriptures respecting human ability is proof that no such ability has existence. They did not speak of it because there is nothing of the kind to be spoken of. And for us to speak of it and insist upon it is to be wise above what is written. This conclusion is confirmed by the freedom and fullness with which the scriptures speak of human inability. Christ repeated it distinctly in one of his public discourses, as you will see by referring to John vi. 44 and 65. He taught it to his disciples, as in themselves sinful men, and partaking of the common inability of a fallen nature. "Without me ye can do nothing." It was a doctrine in which he manifested great interest, and appears to have considered it of great practical importance. The same may be said of his apostles. They appear to have imbibed the spirit of their Lord and Master in this respect, and to have inculcated with the same freedom, the lost, helpless and dependent condition of fallen man. Paul speaks of sinners as without strength, Rom. v. 6; as dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Of the natural man, in respect to the things of the spirit he says, "neither can he know them." But the time would fail for the repetition of all the passages of scripture in which the doctrine of human inability is taught in direct and explicit terms. Now, if I understand you, you do not approve of such preaching, and had you been present you would have felt it necessary to give a caution, lest the preaching of Christ and of

Paul should leave a wrong impression, and send away their hearers excusing themselves in sin. You would have felt solicitous lest Christ and his apostles should be driven from the field, and you would have invoked the Calvinists of New England to help them out with the doctrine of human ability. At least you would have endeavored to supplement their instructions with your discourse, showing that after all they say, "God does not require of men what they have no power to do." To place the matter in a just and true light, let us view your doctrine and that of the Saviour in juxtaposition and contrast.

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him."—*Jesus Christ*.

"God does not require of men what they have no power to do."—*Dr. Tyler*.

Now I appeal to your own candor and reverence for the authority of the scriptures, whether their teachings are not incompatible with your doctrine. Can it be a doctrine of the scriptures when they nowhere teach it? Are we warranted to make the scriptures responsible for our sentiments? If we begin to do it on the principle of implication and construction where shall we stop? Would it not lead to the presumption of certain recent transcendental theologians, who undertake to tell what the scriptures ought to mean and what God ought to do?

Before I dismiss this topic, permit me again to call your attention to the practice of Christ and his apostles, as an example to preachers of the gospel. It seems that they did not hesitate to preach human inability without any qualification. Their language is simple and absolute. "No man *can* come to me." "They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." What better example can preachers have, and what safer course can they take than to follow it? True, men may refuse to hear this truth, and if left to themselves, certainly will. But the servants of Christ must preach his truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Ministers are not responsible for what their hearers do, but they are responsible for what they preach or keep back, of all the counsel of God. It may not be the way to gain popularity, secure a good living, or gather great numbers into the visible church. What then? What if numbers go away and walk no more with the ministers of Christ, just as numbers did when Christ himself preached the same truth, is that a sufficient reason why they should assume the awful responsibility of withholding the truth? If they cannot please men without displeasing

God, and being unfaithful to their trust, can they hesitate which to choose? The time will come, if it has not come already, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. What then? Must ministers preach unsound doctrine to tickle these itching ears? To all this you will of course say no. But remember, human inability, as taught by Christ and his apostles, is one of the first and chief subjects against which human pride revolts; as human ability is one of the first things to which human pride aspires.

As to success in the ministry, in edifying the body of Christ, or instrumentally converting sinners to God, in what way can the prospect be so fair as in preaching faithfully all the counsel of the Lord? Will the Spirit of all grace and truth be more likely to bless the smooth things of policy and flattery, than the truth, which he has moved holy men to speak and record? I say nothing of those imitative operations which are gotten up for the glorification of men, for these I know that you lightly esteem.

My last remark is, the doctrine of your discourse appears to be objectionable on account of its tendencies.

Among these tendencies, the first that offers itself to notice is that which leads to confusion and inconsistency. Of this tendency your discourse affords a pertinent example. In saying this I disclaim all personality. I am not speaking of yourself, but of the doctrine which you have advanced. The inherent difficulties of the doctrine, as they are developed in the Mosaic work of your discourse, I suppose are open to animadversion without giving just cause of offence.

Some of the discrepancies of your discourse, in respect to main positions, I have already brought to your notice. Suffer me now to present a few more examples of a more miscellaneous character.

At one time, as on page 23, and elsewhere, you labor to show that moral inability is no excuse for sin, that it affords no such ground, that it is chargeable with no such effect. At another time, as on page 17, you intimate that if this inability is preached there will be a ground of excuse or a wrong impression, that sinners will be induced to wait God's time, and conclude that they have nothing to do. It is true, you say, *without qualification or explanation*. But what need of these, if moral inability affords no ground of excuse?

To avoid contradiction here, your subject presses you to the absurdity of two senses of inability, when one of those senses

lies beyond the limits of moral agency, and when a moral agent can be unable only in one sense.

At one time, as on page 9, you admit that sinners are unable and that the Scriptures clearly teach it.

At another time, as on page 19, you teach that they are not unable in every sense, but in different senses they may be both unable and able. This, if it mean anything, means that inability is not inability, and that a sinner in respect to the same duty, under the same law, is both able and unable. Here, again, the only escape from contradiction is the absurdity of two senses.

On page 19, you ask, "may not a man be able to do what he has no inclination to?" Here your doctrine forces upon you the necessity of blending two different classes of relations which have no common bond, viz., natural and moral. A man can do outwardly and physically what he has no inclination to do. But can he do it morally, that is, according to the moral law? Your question avoids the true issue. Moreover, this question reminds me of your definition of power. Here, power is strength without inclination. There, power is strength with inclination.

At one time you speak of natural ability and moral agency as the same. At another time you speak of them as different. You say that obligation and dependence must be held in an even scale, as if natural ability were the foundation of obligation, and obligation could not be pressed on any other ground. Then you inquire if this is not a self-evident truth. And then again you attempt to argue this self-evident truth by various considerations. It is a new feature of logic to argue self-evident truths from those which are not. The common process is the reverse of this. At one time you consider the distinction which Edwards pointed out between natural and moral necessity and inability as auxiliary to your doctrine, while at another time you state your doctrine to be natural ability; as if the distinction between natural and moral inability were the same thing as natural ability. Thus you claim the authority of Edwards to your doctrine, when he has said nothing about it. At one time you say you believe that your views are substantially the views which have been maintained by New England Calvinists, generally, since the days of President Edwards. On the next page you state that there are those who make a distinction between natural and moral inability in reality, though not in form, as if there were any that were unwilling to make this distinction. But you add, "At the same time they hold that sinners possess all those intellectual and

moral powers which are essential to moral agency and which render them utterly inexcusable for disobeying one of God's commands," as if some did not hold this. Again you add, "but they object to calling the possession of these powers natural ability or ability of any kind. But this objection seems to me groundless." Thus, as to anything that appears, after your flourish of trumpets about President Edwards and Calvinists of New England generally, it comes out that you are the only responsible author of the doctrine of natural ability. Some, you think, believed it who would not preach it, others objected to it altogether. But the power of progress has led you to put it in form and publicly to teach it. At one time you state your doctrine in an unqualified form, that men have natural ability. At another time, on page 17, you say, "If the preacher affirms, without qualification, that sinners are able to do whatever God requires, there is danger that he will be understood to mean, whether such be his intention or not, that they are able in every sense, that they really labor under no inability whatever." It seems that you were willing to incur the hazard, for whatever of qualification there may be in the discourse, it is so far removed from the doctrine as not to prevent its impression.

At one time you propose natural ability as a panacea to answer all questions and prevent all excuses. At another time, as on page 23, you raise a question which natural ability cannot answer without driving you to downright Arminianism. The question is, "Can the sinner change his inclination?" Your reply to this question is a departure from the doctrine of your discourse, by assuming that a sinful inclination is its own condemnation, the very essence of crime, and the more of it the more criminality, which is leaving your own ground and coming over to mine. I should like to hear you answer this question in accordance with your doctrine. Can a sinner change his inclination? If you say he can, then you are an Arminian. If you say he cannot, then what becomes of natural ability, the doctrine of your discourse, and what is it worth? This was an awkward question for you to raise, as it shows at a glance the utter inanity of your doctrine when brought to the merits of the subject.

Now I say that a doctrine, which puts its advocate to such shifts, must have constitutional infirmity. And if it has wrought such confusion in your mind, what will it not do in the minds of your hearers and readers?

Another tendency of this doctrine, which militates against it,

is that which looks towards those sentiments that constitute an acknowledged shipwreck of the faith.

Its proclivity to the Pelagian and Arminian heresies, has been observed, and has, as you admit, excited fears, in some quarters, that have been expressed. And how have those fears been allayed? By calling up the name of President Edwards, when, so far as appears, he had no paternity in respect to this doctrine. He made use, indeed, of the distinction between natural and moral inability. But how that distinction helps natural ability does not appear. There is such a family likeness between the power of contrary choice, self-determining power, and natural ability, that no one can be esteemed captious or suspicious if he should express his fears of a relationship. If a man embraces the doctrine of your discourse, he will find the descent easy and not very protracted to kindred and fatal errors. "*Facilis descensus Averni.*" Besides, your doctrine appears to be in alarming proximity to Perfectionism. God requires of all men that they be perfect as their Father which is in heaven is perfect. And your doctrine affirms that "God does not require of men what they have no power to do." Men, therefore, have power to be perfect, or to do what perfection implies. And if they have the power, who can say that they will not exercise it? Indeed, who can say that they have not exercised it already? And if you carry out the doctrine of your discourse, it must land you on the dreary coasts of Perfectionism, "a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

Again, the tendency of the doctrine of your discourse is to cherish a spirit of self-confidence and independence. You insist on the necessity of teaching sinners their dependence on the grace of God, without which they never will repent. And how do you propose to do this? By inculcating their moral inability, and then counteracting it by assuring them that they have power to do all that God requires? Will this doctrine make them feel their dependence? It seems to me it will have just the opposite effect. The result will be much the same as if you shut a man up in prison, and put a key in his pocket with which he could open the gate and come out when he pleases. Will he be likely to feel his dependence while he has that key? The power which your doctrine puts in the sinners hands is his key, and I see not why he should feel dependent while he has it. How was it with Felix? He was a believer in the doctrine of your discourse, if

we may judge from his practice. He thought he had power to do all that God required, or he would never have lost the opportunity which he had. And this doctrine was the cause of his eternal ruin. Paul did not indeed preach this doctrine to him, for he never preached it, but sinful inclination and the great Deceiver had taught it to him, he followed it and was lost. This idea of natural ability is the principal cause of that procrastination which generally and fatally prevails among men. If God requires nothing of men that they have no power to do, why should they not feel independent. They are so in fact, and why should they not enjoy it? Indeed, if I believed in the doctrine of your discourse, dependence would be the last thing I should ever think of preaching to men, or rather it is what I should never think of preaching at all. Independence is what all men, in a natural state desire. For this they earnestly contend as for a birthright. This feeling makes them restive and turbulent under all intimations of divine sovereignty. Their supposed natural ability clashes in their feelings with the divine prerogatives, and they are prompted by a conceit of natural ability to regard the government of God as partial and unjust. This doctrine of natural ability cherishes the spirit of independence in one of two ways; either by raising the conceit that the power has wrought out its results, in which case it ends in dead formality, or by a confidence that it will be exercised in due season.—The young man that came to Christ the Pharisee, and the church at Laodicea are examples of the former method, and of the latter method, we have innumerable examples in the multitudes that “resolve, rësolve and die the same.” These all mistake their own state, they flatter themselves, if not flattered by their ministers, they trust in their natural ability, it is their righteousness; but it proves to be a fatal delusion, that hides from them the truth that they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. You see then that the examples of the influence of this doctrine do not recommend it to our belief or practice. It is a doctrine that exalts man against God, and strengthens in sinners the spirit of pride and rebellion. This, of course, is not the purpose for which you preach it, you wish to make men sensible of obligation; but they turn it to the use of their own perverse feelings.

Again, the doctrine of your discourse tends to shield impenitence and unbelief.

“Without conviction of sin there can be no repentance for sin, and consequently no pardon nor salvation.” “But what is con-

viction?" You say, "it is a sense of guilt." I say it is more, it is a sense of inexcusable and remediless guilt, that is remediless by any power which the sinner possesses. That "the heart is *desperately* wicked." But take it in your sense, conviction is guilt not only proved but felt, a *sense* of guilt. Now is the sinner likely to feel his guilt, and feel concerned about it while you tell him he has power to do all that God requires? The idea of this power will tend to blind him to his guilt, to quiet his conscience and make him feel that the remedy is in his own hands. You have shown him that he is in the prison, but then you have given him a key with which he can unlock the door and come out when he pleases. This will tend to weaken his sense of guilt. He will be ready to say to himself, what do I care for the guilt, so long as I have power to do all that God requires? My case cannot be so bad as many would have me believe. For, say what they will about native depravity and actual sin or the necessity of regeneration, I am on safe ground, for I have power, and I intend to use it when the necessity arises. Tell him of the wickedness of his heart, and that he is morally unable, and he will turn upon you and say, what of that? I have power in another sense to do all that God requires. I do not say that you would intentionally authorize or encourage such feelings, I know you would not, but I do say, most if not all impenitent sinners will make this use of your doctrine. They will consider the power of which you speak as a remnant of natural goodness, surviving the fall, and if not meritorious in itself, it is a power to acquire merit, as it must be, if it is power to do all that God requires.

Permit me to refer you to the case of those pricked in the heart at the day of Pentecost, who said, "men and brethren what shall we do?" What was their state of mind, what their conviction? Was it a mere sense of guilt, or was it also a sense of their helplessness in that guilt? It seems they knew of nothing they could do, they were at a stand, their question implies a strong negation, there is nothing we can do. Now if they, in another sense had power to do all that was required of them, would they not have known it, and would it not have prevented their coming to this point of despair as to their own resources? Or supposing Peter had believed your doctrine, and instead of charging home moral inability without qualification or reserve, had, through fear of furnishing them with an excuse, said, you have power to do all that God requires, would his preaching probably have been of any saving effect? The same is true of the jailor of Phillippi, and true of every case

of saving conversion. I should have no confidence in an experience founded on any state of feeling short of entire abandonment of all hope from natural powers, or any arm of flesh, and I presume you would say the same. But why such abandonment if sinners have natural ability? If genuine experience leads to such abandonment, it must be because natural ability has no existence. Your doctrine is then contrary to the testimony of all true experience. It is no less inconsistent with the statements of Scripture respecting the natural state of fallen man. Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually." Isaiah i. 5, 6. "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, they have not been cleansed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Jer. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who *can* know it?" Eph. iv. 18, 19. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness."—Where is your power to do all that God requires amidst this total wreck of human nature?

I might shew that your doctrine is equally at variance with the Scriptural account of regeneration. But I will tax your patience with only one suggestion more. Your doctrine leaves no place for Christ, and therefore fosters unbelief. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. But is he lost that has power to do what God requires? The whole need not a physician but they that are sick. Is he sick who has power to do all that God requires? Christ came to be eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, life to the dead, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. But how is the man blind, deaf, lame, bound or dead, who has power to do all that God requires of him? And if natural ability is thus powerful what need of Christ?

Now Sir, as you express deep concern lest the doctrine of inability should leave a wrong impression, and endanger the souls of men, let me ask you, respectfully, as my elder brother, is there no danger that sinners will be quieted in self-confidence and false peace; no danger that they will entertain partial and superficial views of their sin, as to its nature and extent; no danger that they will be encouraged in presumption and unbelief; and that

their souls will perish in this delusion? To me it appears certain, that if they be not driven from this false refuge of natural ability, there is no hope of their salvation. Is it not safe to preach as Christ and his apostles preached? Did they not know what is good and profitable for men and what their case requires? Surely, the man that condemns the preaching that distinctly recognizes the impotency of sinners, either is not aware of the sweep of his sentence, or he must be destitute of reverence for the highest authority.

As to excuses, the doctrine of human inability furnishes no ground for them, as you repeatedly affirm. It is the sinners crime and the very essence of his criminality. No man who makes an excuse on this ground, believes in its validity. Every man knows that his inability is his sin, and the source of all his criminality, he is conscious of this, and if he will make an excuse of it, he will make an excuse of any truth. The fault is not in the preaching, but in the perversity of the sinners heart. The gospel will to some prove a savor of death unto death in spite of all we can say or do. But observe the decided advantage which the doctrine of human inability gives in treating the case of sinners. It prepares the way to bring home to them at once the whole truth in respect to their condition and prospects, and the more freely to direct them to Christ; it strips them of their filthy garments, preparatory to their receiving the robe of Christ's righteousness; it lays them at the feet of sovereign grace, that they may the more readily submit, and learn the new song of redeeming love. If they object, or excuse themselves on the ground of inability, show them what that inability is, and they will find no comfort in it, unless they are determined to be excused, and then, any thing will answer their purpose, true or false. If they still plead their want of strength, tell them, as did a venerated Father of by-gone days, "you need no strength to fall down." This, it seems to me, is a much more consistent and scriptural mode of treatment, than to administer an anodyne of natural ability, and thus turn the sinners confidence from Christ to himself.

For the reasons I have stated I cannot say AMEN to your discourse, but feel in duty bound to enter my protest against it. I fear it will do much harm, especially to those that seek countenance in their opposition to the truth. They are the persons who will receive the greatest injury. The established believer, who is conversant with his Bible, will be protected by its panoply; but

the caviler, the self-righteous, the loose and superficial thinker, and, above all, those who are ready to send a message after Christ, saying, we *will not* have this man to rule over us, will be likely to take courage from the doctrine of your discourse, and to gather up their natural ability and put it to service in opposition to the Cross of Christ.

In conclusion, allow me to say, I regret the necessity which I have felt of remarking on your discourse. It was thrown so directly in my path, that I did not see how I could, consistently with duty, be silent. If I have written anything unkind or unduly severe, I ask pardon. If I have, in any respect, misrepresented your views, it is only because they have been misapprehended. And be assured, Dear Sir, that I have felt no desire to impeach or disparage your mental or moral integrity. I do not question the rectitude of your motives. You have, for aught I know, done as well as any man could do in the case. The difficulties are inherent in the subject. The trouble is, you have undertaken to do what could not be done. It is simply a mistake. For I am very sure that no man, nor even Angel, could have taken the position which you appear to have taken, and have maintained it in consistency with himself or the Scriptures.

Yours very truly, &c.,

JOSEPH HARVEY.